



Good health and wellbeing in rural and remote Australia.

MEDIA RELEASE

2 JUNE 2016

JOIN A DISCUSSION ON THE CHALLENGES FACED BY THE RURAL/REMOTE SECTOR

All the evidence shows that health issues are a top priority for voters in the current election campaign. This is even more so for the seven million people who live in rural, regional and remote areas, who have poorer health overall and find it harder to access the services they need at the right time and in the right place.

The NRHA is running a campaign to help ensure that people concerned about rural health are asking the appropriate questions of candidates in the forthcoming ballot. It is essential that the parties and their leaders understand the particular needs of country people where health and health-related matters are concerned - and commit to taking action on them.

Securing such commitments and action has been the practical and political challenge for the rural and remote health sector for many years. This work has been led for twenty years by the National Rural Health Alliance, which has played a leading role in bringing disparate interests together into a unified and coherent force to be reckoned with.

As part of its Election campaign, the NRHA is holding a 90-minute webinar on Thursday 9 June to focus on how the rural/remote health sector was built and to consider its challenges for the future.

The webinar also provides the opportunity to farewell and thank Gordon Gregory, who has played a leading role in the work of the NRHA and in building the sector's capacity. Gordon Gregory retired in April.

By enabling individuals anywhere in Australia - anywhere in the world - to take part, as long as they can access the Internet, the webinar is another chance for the NRHA to act on the principle of recognising that the needs of those in more remote areas are best identified, met and managed by the people themselves. The NRHA has been a central presence but its focus has always been decentralised, giving primacy to health consumers and other citizens in their home communities.

The webinar is an opportunity for people involved with rural and remote health in Australia to reflect on the years since the 1st National Rural Health Conference, held in 1991, which began the sector's development and out of which the NRHA was born.

Speakers on the webinar will include Joan Lipscombe, who worked as a senior public servant with Commonwealth and State/Territory Health Ministers to develop the first national rural health policy.

Michael Wooldridge, Health Minister in the Howard Government, will reflect on how investment in rural and remote health came to be considered a priority, resulting in financial commitments to rural and remote health which are still vital today.

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Other speakers will highlight the role of rural communities and the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health sector.

The final presentation will see Dani Dries of the National Rural Health Student Network emphasise the commitment and capacity of the new generation of rural and remote health leaders. It will be their challenge to build on the lessons of the past so that the special needs and capacities of rural and remote communities are given fair and appropriate attention in this and all forthcoming election campaigns.

Webinar contributors will be able to make comments and ask questions online.

Please register here <http://ruralhealth.org.au/events/webinar/-the-making-of-Australias-rural-and-remote-health-sector-and-its-challenges-for-the-future>

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